

Those Who Give

# Grateful Patient Sends Heartfelt Letter, Generous Gift to Jefferson



John Kessler, of Blackwood, NJ, is grateful for the exceptional care he has received from dozens of Jeffersonians, especially Drs. Nathaniel Evans and Charles Yeo, over the last six years.

In June 2008, John Kessler was just shy of his 56th birthday – and had been experiencing several days of severe pain from a familiar source: kidney stones. He remembers that it was Friday the 13th when he and his wife, Mary, made the decision to drive from their home in Blackwood, New Jersey, to the Emergency Room at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital.

He says that by the time he had a CT scan, the stones seemed to have become lodged, reducing the intensity of his pain. But he and wife soon received shocking news: the scan showed that John had stage IV pancreatic cancer.

That diagnosis started a journey at Jefferson that has lasted six years – and counting. His experience has included a Whipple procedure by Charles J. Yeo, MD, a series of eight chemoembolization treatments when the pancreatic cancer spread to his liver, an upper lobectomy performed by Nathaniel Evans, MD, when he was diagnosed with primary lung cancer and, most recently, 34 rounds of chemotherapy to combat a recurrence of pancreatic cancer.

Despite the many challenges he has faced, John remains upbeat, optimistic and very grateful for the care he continues to receive at Jefferson. In fact, in June of this year, he sent a handwritten letter and generous gift to the Department of Surgery to recognize the individuals who have helped him along the way. The gift was split between the Pancreatic Research Fund and Thoracic Surgery Research & Education Fund.

*“Everyone I have encountered, from the intake person in the emergency room to the people who would ask if it was a convenient time to clean my room, have been truly exceptional. I believe the attitude at Jefferson is as healing as the medicine.”*

“The Kesslers’ gift is supporting clinical research in lung and esophageal cancer,” explains Dr. Evans, Director of the Minimally Invasive Thoracic Surgery Program. “Ongoing research in our program is exploring the impact of minimally invasive techniques on patient outcomes and identifying risk factors for recurrence in early stage patients. Grateful patient support like theirs is crucial to getting these types of projects off the ground.”

“The care at Jeff, to me, is just extraordinary, and I believe in commending a job well done,” says John, who has been married to Mary for 32 years and has two grown daughters. “The doctors have been very matter of fact and direct in giving us the best way to go, but at the same time, they’re very courteous and respectful. We experienced that with everyone we met at Jefferson.”

For information about making a contribution to the Department of Surgery, please contact Lara Goldstein in the Jefferson Office of Institutional Advancement at **215-955-8797** or [lara.goldstein@jefferson.edu](mailto:lara.goldstein@jefferson.edu).

# Surgical Solutions

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## News in Brief



**David Ehrlich, MD**, has joined the Division of Plastic Surgery. Dr. Ehrlich recently completed a fellowship in microvascular surgery at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania and specializes in breast reconstruction and microvascular surgery.



**Hooman Noorchashm, MD, PhD**, has joined the Divisions of Cardiothoracic Surgery and Surgical Research. Dr. Noorchashm is dual certified in general and thoracic surgery. He recently completed a fellowship in cardiothoracic surgery at the Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston.



**David Rittenhouse, MD, (SKMC ‘06)** has joined the Division of Acute Care Surgery. Dr. Rittenhouse is a graduate of both the general surgery residency program and critical care surgery fellowship program at Jefferson. He will practice in Center City and at Jefferson’s trauma center at Paoli Hospital.

Congratulations to the following faculty members on their recent promotion or advancement: Drs. **Adam Berger** (Professor), **Kris Kaulback** (Clinical Associate Professor), **Francesco Palazzo** (Chief of Surgery at Methodist Hospital, Vice Chair of Surgery at Jefferson), **Jordan Winter** (Associate Professor). Drs. **Herbert Cohn** and **Gordon Schwartz** were also granted emeritus professor status.

**Gerald Isenberg, MD, FACS**, has been elected Vice President of the American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons for a one-year term. He has also been named to the Residency Review Committee, appointed by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education.

News from the Spring awards ceremony: Drs. **Cataldo Doria, Walter Kraft, Francesco Palazzo, Ehyal Shweiki**, and **Jordan Winter** received the Dean’s Award for Excellence in Education. Dr. **James Diehl** received the Dean’s Award for Faculty Mentoring.

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